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# MARY McGROARY: The Land of the Free Becomes a Finks' Paradise

You may remember the lovely inscriptions carved over the main Post Office: "Messenger of Sympathy and Love" and "Servant of Parted Friends."

Put them out of your mind.

The U.S. Postal Service, as it is now called, has gone into the spy game, like so many other agencies which we are paying to do something else. Last year, officials admitted to a House Judiciary subcommittee, the people who were supposed to deliver mail were screening some of it. Four thousand, four hundred citizens were under "mail covers," which is to say that before they got their letters, someone wrote down where they came from and the date they were sent.

Why, you may well ask, is the post

office doing this? They do it, it seems, because other government agencies asked them to. Including the Fish and Wildlife Service, possibly stopping a salmon poacher, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which couldn't get their man any other way.

Those brought up in the tradition of "neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night" may be sorry to hear that the courier is being stayed in the swift completion of his appointed rounds by the need to snoop. But they are not surprised.

"Someone to watch over me" used to be the name of a yearning old Gershwin tune. Now it is the sub-title of the U.S. government.

Eighteen government agencies

spend full time watching over their fellow citizens. And almost every day we hear that some group like the IRS, which we are paying to do something else, is keeping tabs on us.

Even the most despondent American can no longer say with confidence, "No one cares if I live or die." Some file clerk will.

The FBI, for instance, maintains 6,500,000 files — not all, Director Clarence M. Kelley is quick to add, on individuals. Organizations have dossiers, too.

Getting in is the easiest thing in the world. One nameless person can do it for you. Someone who doesn't like the way you comb your hair, and suspects you of worse, trots around to his local bureau and tells an agent on you.

Getting out is impossible, even for a member of Congress. The rules say the file is indestructible. There are exceptions. If you're lucky enough to be falsely arrested for a crime you didn't commit, you can be sprung. Otherwise, it's no go.

You cannot see the file. You can be told about newspaper clippings, which you may have already read. But the derogatory information is not for your eyes. The informer wouldn't like it. If he were exposed, he might not inform any more, and if that happened the FBI's collection of undocumented and irrelevant information would not grow, and who would want that?

Kelley said the other day that the material might become relevant, be-

cause the subject might be named to a "sensitive government post." Some people might wonder why the Bureau can't wait. That's out of the question. The FBI operates on the principle of "just in case" or "you never know."

If you're in the FBI's files, the chances are excellent that you're also in the CIA's too; its library was vastly enlarged during the war and the agency's intensive search for "foreign influence" in the peace movement.

You can't see your CIA file, either. Yes, Rep. Bella Abzug, D-N.Y., extracted hers from an embarrassed William Colby, the CIA chief, but it was censored. The "sensitive sources," which is the CIA's name for informers, have to be shielded. If

they weren't, other sensitive sources would dry up and then where would we be?

Where we are now is that the land of the free and the home of the brave is being turned into a finks' paradise. The informer is the first-class citizen with full protection of the law. The "subject" — and he represents the largest-growing population in the country — is on file and under suspicion.

Maybe one way to celebrate the bicentennial would be to re-enact the Boston Tea Party with citizens, whose only crime was to dissent from government policy, throwing their files into the harbor. It might cause some pollution, but nothing like what's going on now.

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